POSITIVE PARENTING

FOR PEACE AT HOME AND SUCCESS IN SCHOOL

HOW CAN I EXPRESS MY FEELINGS SO CHILDREN WILL LISTEN?

From Systematic Training for Effective Parenting by Dinkmeyer, McKay and Dinkmeyer (Parents' Handbook, p. 72 - 75)

When you have a problem with a child, you need to talk about it. When you do, share your feelings respectfully. When we are frustrated with children or want them to change behavior, we often use you-messages such as: "You should know better than that," or "You need to stop that." Children who hear a lot of you-messages get discouraged and may fight back or stop listening. You-messages can lower self-esteem, don't invite cooperation and are discouraging.

I-messages are a more effective way to talk with children about a problem. I-messages tell how you feel when a child ignores your rights, is disrespectful, or is doing something that concerns you. These statements focus on you rather than on the child. I-statements simply let children understand how their behavior is affecting you, which, because they are children, they may not entirely understand without your help.

When you		
I feel	because _	
name of an emotion		describe effect on you (this part is optional
nples:		

I-messages help children understand what their actions mean to you. They hear a way of talking about problems without blame. And they learn to share feelings in a way that can help solve problems. An I message shows respect for yourself and for the child with whom you are communicating.

When you take all the candy, I feel concerned because the other kids won't have any.

Keeping angry feelings out of an I-message is important. Anger makes it hard for children *not* to feel blamed. To move away from anger, try to give the message *before* you feel angry – for example, you might start out by feeling worried or disappointed. Try communicating at that point. When you are really angry, get away from the child until you cool down or ask someone else to handle the problem.